

The concurrent resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 2316, the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act of 2007.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LYNCH). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Michigan?

There was no objection.

HONEST LEADERSHIP AND OPEN GOVERNMENT ACT OF 2007

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 437 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 2316.

□ 1440

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 2316) to provide more rigorous requirements with respect to disclosure and enforcement of lobbying laws and regulations, and for other purposes, with Mrs. TAUSCHER in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered read the first time.

The gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SMITH) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan.

□ 1440

Mr. CONYERS. Madam Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Chairman, the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act reported out of the Committee on the Judiciary on a bipartisan basis builds on the work of the last Congress to make long-needed reforms to the Lobby Disclosure Act and related rules and law.

The legislation before us today, right now, reflects the give and take of the legislative process incorporating proposals of Members on both sides of the aisle, both on and off the Judiciary Committee. At the end of the day, I believe that we have a measure that represents a very significant improvement over current law.

By emphasizing increased disclosure and enforcement, the bill is defined to effect practical change in the way that lobbying efforts are reported and monitored. It accomplishes this without infringing upon our first amendment rights as citizens to petition our government for redress of grievances.

The measure before us effects important changes in three areas: Prohibition of unethical conduct, increased disclosure, and enhanced penalties.

First, it ends the practice of Members attempting to use their power to influence private lobbyist hiring decisions. It does it by prohibiting Members and senior staff from influencing hiring decisions or practices of private entities for partisan political gain. Violations can result in not only fines, but imprisonment for up to 15 years.

Second, this measure now under consideration provides for greater disclosure. It requires the disclosure of lobbying activities by many coalitions, as well as the past executive branch and congressional employment of registered lobbyists. It also requires lobbyists to file more detailed reports disclosing their contacts with Congress, as well as certifications that the lobbyist did not give a gift or pay for travel in violation of the rules. These reports are to be filed electronically and more frequently, quarterly rather than semiannually, and they will be made available to the public for free over the Internet in a timely fashion.

Finally, the legislation provides for stronger enforcement. This measure significantly increases the penalties for noncompliance with Lobbying Disclosure Act requirements. Civil penalties are increased from the current \$50,000 per violation to \$100,000, and there are new criminal penalties for knowing, willful and corrupt violations, with potential sentences of imprisonment up to 5 years.

The recent round of lobbying scandals demonstrates that fundamental change is needed. The legislation before us today helps to reform the lobbying process and provides us with an opportunity to begin to rebuild confidence in Congress.

I believe that this legislation represents a realistic approach that strengthens current law to restore accountability in the Congress. This bill is not about any one Member or any one political party. It is about restoring the American people's trust in all of us.

Madam Chairman, it is now time for us to act. We are a few months late in getting around to this measure, but I am sure with the cooperation of Members on both sides of the aisle, we will succeed in our endeavor to raise the integrity of the Congress and restore the American people's trust in all of us.

Madam Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of Texas. Madam Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Chairman, we all deplore unethical conduct by Members of Congress and their staff. Each party has their share of examples. The public wants and deserves clean government, and today we finally bring before the House a bill that seems very familiar. That is because the increased disclosures required in the bill we are ad-

ressing today are largely those that were contained in H.R. 4975, which was introduced by Congressman DAVID DREIER in the last Congress and passed the House then.

Last year's H.R. 4975 contained all of the following provisions: a requirement to disclose postemployment negotiations with private entities; a prohibition on partisan influences on an outside entity's employment decisions; and increased quarterly electronic filing in a public database of lobbyist campaign contributions linked to Federal Elections Commission filings.

The legislation also increased civil and criminal penalties for failure to comply, required disclosure by lobbyists of all past executive branch and congressional employment, and contained a prohibition on lobbyists' violation of House gift ban rules. Similar provisions, of course, are included in the legislation before us today.

At the Judiciary Committee's markup, I was glad to see that several Republican amendments that would strengthen this bill were adopted by voice vote. One was an amendment offered by Representative CHRIS CANNON that provides for a 1-year revolving-door ban that would prohibit private lawyers and law firms who enter into contracts with congressional committees from lobbying Congress while under contract to such committee and for 1 year thereafter.

Republicans passed nearly identical reform provisions over a year ago. I am pleased to finally see legislation come before the House this Congress that substantially mirrors Republican efforts from the last Congress.

The concepts of greater transparency and more accountability are not the property of any one political party, but it just so happens that Republicans led the way in the last Congress by writing a reform package very similar to the one we are considering today. A simple comparison of the provisions in this bill with those in H.R. 4975 from the last Congress will show that what we see on the House floor today is a clear reflection of what we saw on the House floor last year.

I had hoped a vote on these measures would have occurred much earlier in this Congress, but I am happy to cast my vote again today for these reforms.

Madam Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CONYERS. Madam Chairman, I am pleased to yield 1½ minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Ohio (Mr. SPACE).

Mr. SPACE. Madam Chairman, I rise today in support of the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act of 2007. For me, reform isn't a political talking point. As the successor of Bob Ney and, to a certain degree, to the illegal actions of Jack Abramoff, it is an absolute necessity.

I campaigned on the promise that I would do everything in my power to clean up Washington. This Congress has begun to do that. Earlier this year